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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CONNECTICUT, INC.

CGA Government Administration and Elections Committee
March 18, 2013 Public Hearing

Comments provided by: Susan Voris, Election Laws Specialist,
League of Women Voters of Connecticut

My name is Susan Voris. I am the Election Laws Specialist for the League of Women Voters of Connecticut, a statewide organization with over 1600 members. The League is dedicated to improving the electoral process.

SB 729 – An Act Concerning a Pilot Program to Allow Early Voting.

Currently absentee balloting is the only form of early voting allowed in Connecticut. The League is a strong supporter of no-excuse absentee ballots. However, while the League supports efforts to maximize voter participation and early voting in concept, the devil is often in the details. This bill lacks enough specificity for the League to be able to support or oppose it.

SB 1118 – An Act Concerning Qualifications of Election Moderators.

The League believes in the mandatory training and supervision of all election workers to promote uniform compliance with federal and state laws. We further believe that the right to vote with confidence in the election process must be guaranteed to all.

SB 1118 would prohibit the Secretary of the State from certifying *"any person as moderator or alternate moderator who has been convicted of or pled guilty or nolo contendere to, in a court of competent jurisdiction, any felony involving fraud, forgery, larceny, embezzlement or bribery or a violation of this title."* While we understand and can support a provision that would preclude individuals convicted of crimes like fraud or forgery, which bear directly on a person's honesty, from acting as moderators because of the impact on voter confidence, we are concerned about including in the prohibition *"a violation of this title"* which could potentially be used to disqualify moderators based on minor offenses or misinterpretations of election and campaign finance laws which have no bearing on the honesty of the individual or voter confidence (e.g. excluding the press from the polling place, failing to file timely campaign statements or certifications). The requirement that the individual must have been convicted or pled guilty in a court of competent jurisdiction might afford some protection in these situations (which would rarely rise to that level); however, we believe that it is best to spell out the types of violations under Title 9 which might be grounds for disqualification in the bill. Accordingly, if the Committee decides to move forward with SB 1118, we recommend either deleting the reference to *"a violation of this title"* or qualifying it to make clear that the violation must reflect on the honesty of the individual moderator.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

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